



Network News

Your Arizona Parent School Connection



Spring 2010

Vol. 18 No. 3

Look What's New!

by Barb Ross

The Parent Information Network (PIN) is pleased to announce Maureen Mills, our newest team member, who will serve Central Maricopa County, area code 602. Maureen is the mother of two teenagers and an 11 year old who happens to have Down syndrome. "I am excited to be part of the PINS team, helping parents as I have been helped by the Parent Information Network." Welcome aboard Maureen!

NEWLY REVISED ~ Early Childhood Transition: AzEIP to Preschool is a free workshop for parents. It is an introduction to Early Childhood Special Education (preschool services) to help families explore their options before leaving the Arizona Early Intervention Program (AzEIP). Tips are included to help prepare themselves and their children for a smooth transition. This workshop, available in English and Spanish, will be provided free by staff from the Parent Information Network, Raising Special Kids, and Pilot Parents of Southern Arizona. To schedule a workshop in your area contact one of the PIN Specialists on page 4.



Prior Written Notice (PWN)

What is it and why should I read it?

by Teri Rademacher

Prior Written Notice (PWN) is intended to provide parents with a written notification of what a public education agency (PEA) is proposing or refusing to do, what information was used to arrive at that decision, and resources for parents to assist them in understanding their procedural safeguards. The PWN is one of the required notices provided to parents in their native language or other mode of communication.

The PEA should send a PWN to parents following a Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET) or Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting. Parents should be vigilant and read the PWN when they receive it to ensure that it clearly reflects what transpired at the meeting(s) and the proposal(s) that were not only agreed to, but those that were refused. When completed correctly, the PWN should be a comprehensive overview of the meeting. If a parent does not agree with what action the PEA has proposed or refused, then he/she should follow-up with a letter and express his/her concerns. The PWN provides the parent(s) an opportunity to seek a resolution before any action is taken.

When—According to the implementing regulations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 34 CFR § 300.503, written notice . . . must be given to the parents of a child with a disability a reasonable time before the public agency—

- (1) Proposes to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child or the provision of FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education) to the child; or
- (2) Refuses to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child or the provision of FAPE to the child

What - The regulations also outline the content of the notice. It must include—

- (1) A description of the action proposed or refused by the agency;
- (2) An explanation of why the agency proposes or refuses to take the action;
- (3) A description of each evaluation procedure, assessment, record, or report the agency used as a basis for the proposed or refused action;
- (4) A statement that parents of a child with a disability have protection under the procedural safeguards of this part and, if this notice is not an initial referral for evaluation, the means by which a copy of a description of the procedural safeguards can be obtained;
- (5) Sources for parents to contact to obtain assistance in understanding the provisions of this part;
- (6) A description of other options that the IEP Team considered and the reasons why those options were rejected; and
- (7) A description of other factors which are relevant to the agency's proposal or refusal.

How – The notice must be—

- (1) Written in language understandable to the general public; and
- (2) Provided in the native language of the parent or other mode of communication used by the parent, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so.

If the native language or mode of communication of the parent is not written language, the public agency must take steps to ensure that the notice is translated orally or by other means to the parent in his or her native language or other mode of communication. They also need to make sure that the parent understands the content of the notice.

For more information, contact your regional PIN Specialist listed on page 4 and request a copy of *Prior Written Notice (IE03)* or download it from our website at www.azed.gov/ess/pinspals.

Extended School Year (ESY) Services

by Barb Ross

All children who have a current Individualized Education Program (IEP) must be considered for extended school year (ESY) services by their IEP team. ESY eligibility is an IEP Team decision:

- Made annually on an individual basis
- Based on data collected throughout the school year
- Made no later than 45 calendar days before the last day of the school year

ESY services are provided to prevent the loss of the child's learning progress from the regular school year, a decision that is based on a review of existing information about the child and a prediction by the team as to whether that educational progress would be compromised by the absence of ESY services. A student cannot be excluded because of disability, age, or resources

ESY services are necessary when meaningful progress on critical skills identified in the child's IEP will be significantly jeopardized (thus impacting the provision of a free appropriate public education) if educational services are not provided during recesses or the summer months. Critical skills may include self-help skills, social-emotional skills, communication skills, and motor skills. Loss of a specific academic or functional skill may not qualify a student for ESY services unless it results in loss of meaningful educational benefit.

ESY can include a wide range of options in a variety of environments such as school based services, school based with community activities, home instruction by parent with staff consultation, and/or related services alone or along with any other options previously mentioned.

According to the Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services, "Documentation of ESY services shall specify which goal(s) will be reinforced during ESY services...shall describe the type of services (such as direct instruction, specific related services, consultation, or supervision), the beginning date of services, the minutes per week of each service, and where the service will be provided."

Here are a few things to keep in mind regarding ESY services:

- ❖ Determination of the type and amount of ESY services is made on an individual basis.
- ❖ ESY services are for maintenance of regular school year goals and objectives targeting critical skills.
- ❖ Least restrictive environment during ESY may not be the same as during the regular school year.
- ❖ Related services (speech, occupational, physical therapy) must also be considered.
- ❖ Transportation must be considered as part of ESY services.
- ❖ Modifications and accommodations are required as during the regular school year.

For more information on extended school year services check out the AZ-TAS document found online at www.ade.az.gov/ess/publications/ESYAzTAS.pdf.

Child Find

by Amy Dill

Many of us have heard the term "child find," but what does it really mean and how does it apply to our children? Child find is a continuous process of public awareness activities, screening and evaluation designed to identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities, aged birth through 21, who are in need of early intervention or special education services, regardless of the severity of their disability. According to the implementing regulations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 34 CFR § 300.111, child find applies to all children who reside within a state, including children who attend private schools and public schools, highly mobile children, migrant children, homeless children, and children who are wards of the state. Child find also applies to children who are suspected of having a disability, including children who receive passing grades and are advancing from grade to grade.



Child find activities are the responsibility of every public education agency (PEA)—school district or charter school. PEAs must have procedures for the identification and referral of all children with disabilities who are in need of early intervention and special education services. All school-based staff must review those procedures in order to respond to parental concerns regarding their child's development or educational progress. [Arizona Administrative Code, R7-2-401 (C)(D).]



Powerful research substantiates that the window of opportunity to influence child development is during the first years of life. Thus, the early identification of young children with disabilities or who may be at risk for developmental delay is extremely important. The Arizona Early

Intervention Program (AzEIP) provides a statewide system of supports and services for families of children, birth to three, with disabilities or developmental delays. If you have any concerns about a child ages birth through three, you may refer the child for an eligibility screening by visiting <https://egov.azdes.gov/CMSInternet/main.aspx?menu=98&id=3026> or by calling AzEIP at 602-532-9960 or toll free at 888-439-5609.

If you have concerns about your child's progress or learning (academic, social/emotional, behavioral, cognitive, language, or motor skills), and they are between the ages of 3 and 21, you may request that your child be screened and/or evaluated by the local Public Education Agency. A written request is recommended and informed written consent is required for a comprehensive evaluation to determine special education eligibility. Families, schools and communities who are aware of child find procedures can help ensure that all children with disabilities receive services that are "designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment and independent living. . ." (34 CFR 300.1(a)). For more information regarding Child Find, please visit the Arizona Department of Education Child Find website at www.azed.gov/ESS/ChildFind or contact your PIN Specialist about required Child Find procedures and timelines.

Task Force on Best Practices in Special Education and Behavior Management

by Teri Rademacher

A nine member task force legislated with the passage of Senate Bill 1197 and appointed by the State Board of Education on July 15, 2009 was charged with developing best practice recommendations regarding special education and behavior management. The task force was presented with an aggressive timeline with the final report being due to the State Board of Education, State Board of Charter Schools, the Governor, Speaker of the House, President of the Senate, Secretary of State, and the Director of the Arizona State Library, Archives, and Records on or before August 20, 2009.



The driving force behind this piece of legislation was parental concerns regarding the use of seclusions and restraint in Arizona's public schools. Its passage was also fueled by events on the national scene, including hearings held last May in the House of Representatives regarding a report from the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) entitled, *Seclusions and Restraints, Selected Cases of Death and Abuse at Public and Private Schools and Treatment Centers*. This report begins with the highlights of the GAO's earlier testimony before the House Committee on Education and Labor and contains an overview of Federal and State laws related to the use of restraints and seclusions. The full text version of the GAO report can be found online at www.gao.gov/new.items/d09719t.pdf.

The legislation specifically charged the task force with making recommendations on four required elements:

- ❖ Best practices for managing the behavior and discipline of students with disabilities;
- ❖ Disciplinary actions which should be prohibited;
- ❖ Training for school personnel; and
- ❖ Notice requirements to parents and school administrators.

The task force began by poring over volumes of information including: policies from other states, research from disability advocacy groups, position papers from national organizations, information shared by task force members, research on children in early childhood settings, and the GAO report. The personal impact was illustrated by the passionate, articulate, and oftentimes emotional testimony by families during the Call to the Public portion of their meetings. With this knowledge base, and following a great deal of discussion and debate, the task force produced a thirteen page report addressing the four elements noted above. This report was submitted to the State Board of Education, the State Board for Charter Schools, and others as directed in the legislation. The full text of Senate Bill 1197 and the task force report can be found online at www.azed.gov/ess/taskforcebestpractices.

The eight recommendations found in the first few pages of the report are powerful statements designed for use to construct the foundation of a comprehensive policy for managing behaviors of children in the school setting. While it was the task force's responsibility to make recommendations

regarding best practices in special education; it was the consensus of its members that they could be applied to all children.

It is not by accident that creating a positive school climate is the first recommendation in the report. The task force members were committed to conveying the need for school wide systems change with an emphasis on creating a positive school climate based upon the following:

- ❖ Direct teaching of clear expectations for student behavior;
- ❖ Consistent and fair application of rules;
- ❖ Identifying and managing areas for conflict; and
- ❖ Training staff in methods of positive behavior supports for all students to result in a reduction of school incidents requiring more punitive reactions.

Emphasis on training, reporting, evaluating, and making adjustments based upon data collection can be found throughout the report. Recommendations include training all staff in de-escalation techniques and the use of positive behavioral interventions, and training relevant school staff in the safe use of the



permitted crisis management strategies and data collection. Reporting recommendations include notifying parents, school and central office administration, and the governing board when crisis management actions have been used. The task force members saw great value in the collection of data that could then be used to "make appropriate modifications to policy, training, and practice."

Addressing parental concerns regarding the use of restraint and seclusion, the task force recommended that these strategies should only be used for crisis management, not as recurring behavioral interventions. The task force commented that "strategies such as restraint and seclusion have been inappropriately selected and implemented as 'treatment' or 'interventions' strategies for non-crisis behaviors such as disrespect, noncompliance, or violating school rules." The task force also addressed corporal punishment and without much discussion, agreed to recommend that schools prohibit its use. It was further recommended that schools also prohibit the use of mechanical restraints and physical restraints that restrict the student's ability to breathe and communicate.

Now that the report has been submitted, the State Board of Education and the State Board for Charter Schools are to make the best practice recommendations available to all school districts and charter schools in the state. The local governing



boards are to "conduct a public meeting to review and consider the adoption of the best practice recommendations submitted . . ." (SB 1197). Public meetings must take place on or before June 30, 2010. Parents who would like to comment on this report or any of its components should seize the opportunity and attend the public meeting held by their school district or charter school.



Arizona's Parent Involvement Survey Wants YOU!

This is your opportunity to report how well school staff facilitates parent involvement as a way to improve services and results for children with disabilities. To find out more information contact your PIN Specialist below or call the toll-free PIN hotline at 877-230-PINS (7467) or visit www.azed.gov/ess/parentsurvey. *Just do it!*

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For more information contact the PIN/Child Find Coordinator: Becky Raabe, (928) 679-8106, or Becky.Raabe@azed.gov.

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